

**SONS OF ABRAHAM**  
**PART 12**

Text: Galatians 3:10-14

MAY 9, 2010

**REVIEW/INTRODUCTION:**

In Galatians 3:10-14, Paul sets forth 4 arguments based on the OT Scriptures (Lev., Deut., Hab.), which prove the impossibility of justification by works of the law.

- I. THE OT SCRIPTURES TEACH THAT THE LAW ISSUES A SENTENCE OF CURSING RATHER THAN BLESSING (3:10).
- II. THE OT SCRIPTURES CLEARLY REVEAL THAT NO ONE IS JUSTIFIED BY WORKS OF THE LAW (v. 11).

Last week we saw how Paul understood the brief phrase about faith in Habakkuk 2:4 to express the central statement of the doctrine of faith alone that he was contending for in Galatians.

Habakkuk 2:4 is not only the central truth of this prophecy but it can also be called the great text of the Bible. To understand it is to understand the Christian gospel and the Christian life.

Habakkuk had every human reason to doubt God rather than trust Him yet he did. Because of his faith, he was blessed (i.e., justified). In contrast, the Babylonians trusted in their great wealth and riches; they were guilty of idolatry (2:9, 19). They made their own might their god (1:11) and they were filled with pride (1:8; 2:4). Pride always accompanies self-righteousness. Pride is self-deification. Legalism is man establishing himself as both creature and creator at the same time. In brief, Habakkuk shows how the Babylonians were guilty of self-justification. As a result, they fell under the curse of God (cf. Habakkuk's 5 woes, 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19).

God's people, however, are called to live by faith rather than self-sufficiency and self-absorption. Like Habakkuk, the justified man finds his confidence outside of himself, even amidst trying and perplexing circumstances (cf. 3:17). Habakkuk had no human reason to be confident, yet he confessed that the Lord was his strength (3:19).

Faith alone flies in the face of human reason, particularly in situations like Habakkuk faced. Living by faith in contrast to living by works of the law is an entirely different way to live. This leads us to a very important insight about living by faith versus a life of works.

Like the Babylonians, it is easy and natural to take pride in ourselves and trust in our own resources. However, it is not natural to trust in the resources of someone else. Our flesh delights in taking credit for itself rather than trusting in the credit of another. We understand and crave self-justification but are strangers to the gospel method of justification. And so, living by faith in Christ doesn't come natural to us. In fact, it requires double the work!

First, we have to unlearn a law-driven mentality. We have to unlearn many of our long-standing, deeply rooted, legal notions of how to relate to God and grow in holiness. And, secondly, we have to learn a gospel-driven mentality, which is the only way to relate to God and is the only path to growth in holiness.

We must learn to pray like the Biblical writers and ask the Lord to teach us from His Word how to live by faith rather than by performance. For example, in Psalm 25:4-5, David prays, “<sup>4</sup> Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. <sup>5</sup> Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation...”

Psalm 86:11, “Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.”

Psalm 119:33, “Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end.”

The problem is not that believers do not know what they are suppose to do or lack teaching that directs them on what to do. The problem is that believers lack the proper means and knowledge necessary to keep God's law. They know very little of the gospel and its application for day-to-day living. They know almost nothing of the blessings that are theirs in Christ. Paul understood this and is the reason he prays in Eph. 1:15-23 that believers will comprehend the blessings that are theirs in Christ. Notice what he prays for believers to comprehend in their daily experience:

1. Their future hope (v. 18b);
2. God's inheritance in the saints (v. 18c);

Just a word about the “inheritance” The inheritance is not the Christian's inheritance but God's. This indicates how prized God's people are to Him. God's people are, so to speak, what He looks forward to enjoying forever because they have been bought at the highest price!

3. Their power in Christ (v. 19)

Paul piles up “power words” in order to express the immeasurable greatness of God's power that is working toward believers, which is the same power that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places (v. 20).

Regrettably, very few churchgoers today comprehend such unsearchable riches. They fail to understand that these gospel blessings are as necessary to live the Christian life, as they are to start it.

One of the reasons so many believers struggle with guilt and a sense of God's displeasure is because they fail to understand that justification (i.e., the gospel) is to serve as the basis of their day-to-day acceptance with God (as Habakkuk says, "the righteous shall live by his faith.").

Jerry Bridges writes,

"Why do so many believers, including those deeply serious about their Christian commitment, live lives of quiet desperation? One answer is that we have a truncated view of the gospel, tending to see it only as a door we walk through to become a Christian. In this view, the gospel is only for unbelievers. Once you become a Christian, you don't need it anymore except to share with people who are still outside the door. What you need to hear instead are the challenges and how-tos of discipleship," (*The Gospel for Real Life*, pp. 12-13).

This truncated view of the gospel is precisely what Paul is arguing against in Galatians 3:11. By quoting Habakkuk 2:4, Paul reveals how the doctrine of justification is a doctrine to live by each and every day.

Habakkuk says, "the righteous shall live by his faith," not "the righteous shall live by law." The believer lives by faith and is directed by the law. The believer finds life in the Good News and obtains directions in the Great Commandment. The gospel is the key for life and the Law is the rule of life. But, the law never drives the believer to live it merely directs him how to live.

The law doesn't create life or provide any power to live as Paul says in Galatians 3:21b, "...For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law." We are to live by faith in Christ as He is freely offered to us in the gospel.

The more this good news is impressed upon our hearts, the more we respond with gratitude and willingly obey from a joyful heart rather than forced, duty like a slave. The law can only produce external conformity, whereas the gospel produces internal agreement.

This is the issue: Is justification the source of our obedience or the result?

Paul says that justification is the source of our obedience. The gospel produces good works. God's favor, acceptance and good will toward us is not the reward for our performance (i.e., obedience) but rather the source of our performance. Good works do not earn God's favor they flow from it!

In Romans 12:1, Paul says that it is in light of God's mercies in Christ that we in turn offer ourselves as living sacrifices. However, whenever as believers we fail to live our lives in light of Christ's mercies, discipleship or following Christ becomes nothing more than a self-righteous makeover.

Discipleship degenerates into an act of self-justification in which we, like Adam and Eve, attempt to add a few more fig leaves to our lives in order to cover up our guilt-ridden, unassured hearts in order to gain a sense of God's favor and acceptance.

The gospel frees us from this kind of enslaving law-driven mentality. The gospel frees us from viewing our sanctification/discipleship/following Christ as acquiring more of God's favor.

The gospel-driven life is not one of constantly *acquiring* but of *receiving*. In our daily sanctification, as we receive deeper and deeper impressions of Good News, an abundance of joy fills our hearts and then it overflows in a love for God and a wealth of generosity and loving service to others (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2).

No amount of laws, regardless of how "relevant and practical" they are made to seem can ever create this kind of overflow of joy, gratitude, delight and love.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

As we consider Paul's appeal to Habakkuk 2:4, we must consider carefully that it says the righteous shall live by his faith not Law. Paul summarizes this gospel-driven mentality in 2 Corinthians 5:14 where he writes, "...Christ's love compels us..."

The word, "compel" (συνέχει) literally means, "to exercise continuous control over someone or something, 'to control, to restrain,' hence to compel/motivate/drive.

Paul says Christ's love exercised continual control over his mind and heart and thus it compelled/motivated/drove him to obey/love God and others. What informed Paul daily of Christ's love? Listen to Galatians 2:20, "...the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, *who loved me and gave himself for me,*" (emphasis mine).

Paul says that he looked every day to Jesus Christ and His righteousness as the sole source of his right standing with God. The gospel reminded Paul over and over again of God's love and favor toward him. From this assurance of God's love, you will be driven/motivated, like Paul, to follow Christ and serve others.

Consider: Whatever exercises daily control over your mind will motivate and drive how you live (i.e., relate to God and others)!

Self consciously gospel-centered is how you are to live your life twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year and throughout eternity.

Regrettably, as Jerry Bridges notes, few believers understand this. He writes,

“Unfortunately, many believers do not live as if justification is a permanent, abiding state. They have divorced their hope of eternal life in heaven from their relationship with God today. They think as if they will ‘put on’ Christ’s robe of righteousness at death. Meanwhile, in this life they draw their sense of God’s acceptance from their most recent performance of Christian duties or their avoidance of certain sins. Their ‘robe of righteousness’ for daily living is not that which they have from Christ, but one that they have stitched together by their own performance. They do not live in the here and now as if they are righteous in the sight of God solely because they have the righteousness of Christ,” (*The Gospel For Real Life*, p. 110).

Which “robe of righteousness” do you live by each day? Do you live your daily life in the realization that justification is a permanent, abiding reality? Or, do you live as though your day-to-day acceptance of God is based on how well you live or don’t live?

Do you gain a greater sense of God’s acceptance by what Christ has done for you or by what you do or don’t do for Him? Does Christ’s love, as freely given to you in the gospel, exercise daily control over your thoughts? Does it capture your affections?

Are you trusting solely in the righteousness of Christ for your right standing before God, or do you in some degree find a level of assurance in your own morality, character qualifications, performance or religious duties?

Are you self-consciously aware of the good news of justification and do you enjoy the reality of it in your daily life?

As law-breakers, Paul says we stand guilty before God, the just Judge and owe an enormous debt that we cannot repay. The good news of the gospel tells us that Jesus has assumed our penalty for our law breaking and paid our debt. The gospel tells us that we are no longer law breakers who are condemned by the curse of the law.

The gospel tells us that we are no longer enemies but that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel assures our hearts that God is no longer our Judge who condemns us but rather our Father who loves us. The gospel confirms that we are no longer orphans but sons, co-heirs with Christ in all of His unsearchable riches.

This is love! This is motivation of the highest kind!

From Habakkuk 2:4 (cf. Gal. 3:11), let us remember that as Christians, we are to live by faith in Christ’s work for us and from this obey God’s Law, which directs us but no longer curses us!

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